

Conservation Technical Assistance

"In all the years we operated the farm, we never used NRCS. My son encouraged me to go down about the erosion problem. We worked on a comprehensive conservation plan for the farm and looked at several alternatives. Now the erosion is fixed and we're going to begin work on cross-fencing for better grazing management."

Corene Knutson - Ratliff City, Oklahoma



Pictured left is gully before it was stopped with a grade stabilization structure.

Pictured right depicts results of structure installed.



photos: NRCS Oklahoma

Corene Knutson, a satisfied customer, admires the grade stabilization structure that replaced the gully that once marred the landscape of her farm. Technical and financial assistance from NRCS treated her gully erosion problem.

Conservation Technical Assistance

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) provides basic technical services through direct one-on-one contacts between NRCS and local conservation district employees and a diverse clientele in the state of Oklahoma. These contacts ultimately result in the development of conservation plans corresponding to the needs of the individual landuser in consideration of specific resource concerns. Conservation planning assistance provides natural resource inventories, treatment alternatives, and engineering assistance to a variety of urban, tribal, and traditional landusers to meet client and basic resource needs. Using this help, landusers plan and apply practices and conservation systems that reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance forestland, wetlands, grazing lands, cropland, and wildlife habitat. Technical assistance in the form of conservation planning also provides the basis for potential participation in a host of state and federal conservation programs addressing specific resource concerns. A close partnership between NRCS, 88 local conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts provides the vehicle for delivery of conservation technical assistance in the state.

Demands for Technical Assistance

Conservation program funding levels proposed in the recent farm bill legislation would require an additional emphasis on conservation technical assistance to landusers for the development of conservation plans relative to applications for program assistance. Non-program requests for technical assistance are expected to continue, but response to these requests will be secondary to program obligations. The challenge will be to meet program needs and to respond to basic technical assistance requests with an ever-shrinking workforce.

Accomplishments in 2002

In fiscal year 2002, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided conservation technical assistance to 184,405 customers all across Oklahoma. This technical assistance focused on the development and application of conservation plans to meet a resource management system level of treatment. A resource management system level of treatment assures that all resource concerns within the planned treatment area are addressed to minimum quality criteria. Resource management system level conservation plans were developed on a combined 698,930 acres of cropland,

forest land, grazed land, hayland, other land, and urban land. Resource management systems were applied on a combined 822,100 acres of cropland, forest land, grazed land, hayland, other land, and urban land. These systems are providing sustainable resource protection from erosion and degradation, ensuring continued production of food, fiber, and a quality environment.

Follow-up for Quality

What doesn't show - the service provided after the conservation practices are installed. No successful business or organization walks away from the customer after the sale. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has that same commitment to follow-up with the landowner after the practices are installed, and we continue to serve our customers.

For example, once an animal waste management system is installed (waste storage facilities, waste utilization, nutrient management, pest management, prescribed grazing, fences, etc.) there is a need for follow-up. Continued discussion and evaluation with the farmer/rancher/producer is needed to determine how the practices are working in protecting the water quality and effective utilization of the nutrients from the waste. This can include water analysis, soil testing, and reviewing rotational grazing practices.

Partnership Important to Success

Our customers in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Oklahoma's 88 local conservation districts put conservation practices on the land. All districts provide administrative help in local field offices to keep the NRCS technical specialists working in the field with the customer. Some districts employ conservation technicians to supplement the

Natural Resources Conservation Service staff. This partnership has been a proven success in locally led voluntary effort for conservation of our natural resources.

Success Story

Corene Knutson operates 270 acres in Stephens County, Oklahoma, with the help of her daughter and son-in-law Debra and Chris Fuller. A deep gully that had developed in her pastureland was not only an eyesore, it was becoming a hazard for people and livestock. Her son's suggestion to contact NRCS for help was something she had never done before. Help came from NRCS in the form of technical and program assistance from Earl Weisner, district conservationist, Curt Owens, soil conservation technician, and NRCS employees at the Duncan Field Service Center.

A conservation plan was developed to address Knutson's gully erosion problem and other resource concerns. Erosion estimates indicated that the gully was advancing at a rate of just over 1400 tons/year. Program assistance provided cost-share to construct a grade stabilization structure to stop the gully erosion and provide a multipurpose structure that will also provide livestock water. Knutson is now ready to focus on improving her grazing resource by utilizing cross-fencing for better grazing management.

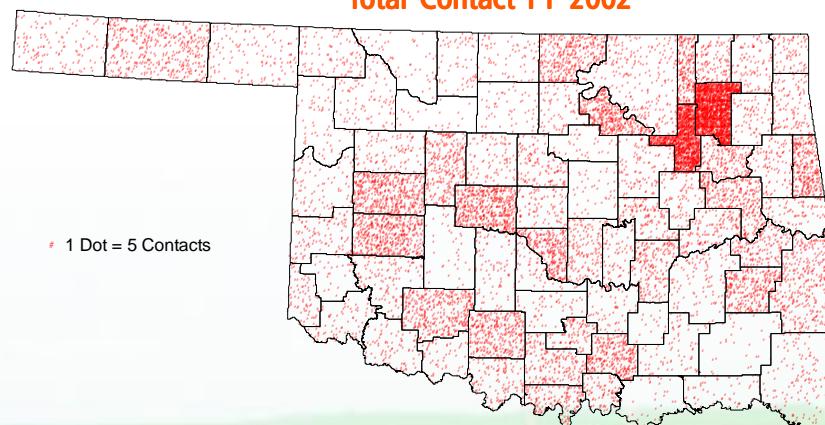
For More Information

For more information on USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office or USDA Service Center, or check out the website: www.ok.usda.gov.

Conservation Technical Assistance Total Contact FY 2002



Osage Tribal Resource Conservationist Melanie Oliver, reviews conservation plan with Rosemary Wood that they developed to improve Wood's native grass. After years of leasing her grassland and the resulting overgrazing, Wood sought technical assistance from NRCS to help her develop a grazing system that would restore her grassland.



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